

**AAR/WR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**22 MARCH 2020, 3:00-5:00pm**  
**Online Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Souad Ali (Arizona Regional Rep), James Berry (Southern California & Western Region Student Director), Marie Cartier (Southern California Regional Rep), Yuria Celidwen (Women's Caucus Liaison), John Erickson (Vice President Elect), Anna Hennessey (President), Anjeanette LeBoeuf (Queer Advocate), Jonathan Lee (Regional Coordinator), Susan Maloney (Honorary Board Member, Advisor, and Facilitator, non-voting), Thien-Huong Ninh (Northern California Regional Rep), Joseph Paxton (Conference Manager, non-voting), Jacob Perez (Northern California Student Rep), Sakena Young-Scaggs (Diversity and Inclusion Advocate)

**Absent:** Roy Whitaker (Resigning Vice President and Program Chair)

**Notes:** Souad Ali present from 3-4pm, Marie Cartier present from 3:30-5pm  
Minutes compiled by Anna Hennessey (with partial notes from Anjeanette LeBoeuf and partial Zoom recording)

**1. Roll call and move to discussion and affirmation of Susan Maloney as 2020-2021 AAR/WR Facilitator for all meetings of the Board and the EC**

Anna Hennessey announces that Susan Maloney, Honorary Board Member, will leave the room so that the board can discuss and affirm Susan's position as AAR/WR 2020-2021 facilitator for all meetings of the board of directors and the executive committee. Anna Hennessey explains that prior to the meeting, written affirmations for Dr. Maloney's work in this role had come through email from at least seven board members. John Erickson asks to call the question to confirm Susan as the facilitator. Anna Hennessey asks the board if anyone would like to say anything before calling the motion to confirm Susan. She calls the motion and asks members to hold their hands up so she can count them. Jonathan Lee advises to use the poll system through Zoom. Several members comment that there are a lot of hands up to affirm Susan Maloney as facilitator. Yuria Celidwen states that her hand is not up and does not understand why the board needs a facilitator, noting that in years past there was no facilitator. Anna Hennessey explains that the EC had utilized Susan Maloney in April 2020 as a facilitator for a second meeting of the EC after issues at a first meeting of the EC had created tension for the EC. Susan Maloney wrote a professional report related to those meetings and the issues at hand. In light of the board's need to address those similar issues, the EC had agreed during its meeting with Susan Maloney that the issue of having a facilitator to the board for 2020-2021 would be brought to the board. John Erickson asks Anna Hennessey to call the vote. Anna Hennessey calls the vote. Anjeanette LeBoeuf seconds the call. Anna Hennessey counts the votes through hands raised on Zoom. The motion passes: 8 in favor, 1 not in favor, 1 abstention. Written affirmations also included 2 other voting members not present at the meeting.

Jonathan Lee requests that future votes on Zoom be done through the poll system. Sakena Young-Scaggs requests that we make a motion to hold voting through the poll system. Anna Hennessey calls the motion, Sakena Young-Scaggs seconds the motion. Susan Maloney returns to the room. Anna Hennessey informs Susan Maloney that the motion has passed for Susan to become the AAR/WR 2020-2021 facilitator.

Thien-Huong Ninh notes that availability of the polling system may depend on the type of Zoom account one has, and Anna Hennessey may not have it since she only has a basic Zoom account. Anna Hennessey suggests that the board use the poll feature for future meetings but not for the 5/22/2020 meeting. Jonathan Lee and Sakena Young-Scaggs agree. Anjeanette LeBoeuf notes that the group chat in Zoom could also be used and the votes can be sent privately to Anna Hennessey since Anna is recording. Sakena Young-Scaggs calls a motion that the private chat be used for any other voting at the 5/22/2020 meeting. Jonathan Lee seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

Board member Marie Cartier enters the board meeting. Susan Maloney describes her work as facilitator for the EC in April 2020, explaining that facilitation helps such that disagreement in groups avoids conflict. Dr. Maloney explains that her service to the board will include 1. listening intently to all members, 2. ask any clarifying questions, 3. gently encourage members not to cross talk. Yuria Celidwen asks if Susan's facilitation service is just for the 5/22/2020 meeting or for all meetings. Susan responds that it will be for all 2020-2021 meetings.

**2. Anna Hennessey calls on all members to give a brief introduction with name, board position, and affiliation.**

**3. Anna Hennessey formally announces the resignation of Dr. Roy Whitaker as 2020-2021 AAR/WR Vice President and Program Chair.**

The full board accepts Dr. Whitaker's resignation and has received his resignation letter.

**4. Discussion, Motion, and Affirmation of Dr. Emily Silverman as 2020-2021 AAR/WR Interim VP and Program Chair: full board discussion moderated by President Anna Hennessey, Past President Souad Ali, and Facilitator Susan Maloney**

Anna Hennessey introduces the topic and expresses support for Emily Silverman, emphasizing Dr. Silverman's previous experience with the work of the VP, the President, and on the board. She also explains that seven written affirmations from members of the board other than herself had already been sent to the full board. Souad Ali explains that her nomination of Emily Silverman for the interim VP position is based on numerous factors, including that Dr. Silverman has already served on the AAR/WR board as VP and Program Chair, as well as AAR/WR unit chair for years. Jonathan Lee explains that he spoke to AAR National and Katherine Downey and Matt Vieson, stating that Downey and Vieson suggest the AAR/WR have a special election because there will be a perpetual issue of having a vacant VP position needing to be filled on an interim basis. Lee states that next year at this time, the position of the President will be vacant since Roy Whitaker will not be here. Lee states that at next year's election, there will be a new VP Elect and the position of the VP will continue to be vacant. Anna Hennessey responds that the VP position next year (2021-2022) will be filled by the current VP Elect, John Erickson, and that what will be open is the President position. Hennessey states that the full membership can vote on a President for the 2021-2022 year. Jonathan Lee states that Anna Hennessey's point is incorrect because John Erickson would automatically become President because the VP becomes President when the President position is vacant. Anna Hennessey responds that the VP only

becomes President in the case of a resignation. She states that the board will not be in the situation of having a President resigning; the situation will be one in which there is a stable interim VP who has been in place for year. She emphasizes that the resignation situation arose this year because Roy Whitaker resigned, but that this will not be the same situation next year.

Susan Maloney asks Jonathan Lee if the two people from AAR National he is quoting are paid staff and Jonathan Lee responds that Katherine Downey is a board member. Maloney emphasizes that the region can decide how to proceed and that the AAR/WR board can vote on the issue of filling the interim VP position. Maloney suggests that the board vote on the issue and then address Jonathan Lee's concern about future vacancies. Dr. Souad Ali agrees with Susan Maloney and states that the AAR/WR Operating Agreement is consistent with Susan's point. Addressing Jonathan Lee's point about the perpetual need to fill the VP position, Souad Ali returns to Anna Hennessey's point that John Erickson will be the VP in 2021-2022 and then the President the following year; thus, the board will only need to elect an interim President in 2021-2022. After that, Ali explains, the presidential line will be filled and the process will go on as usual.

Marie Cartier expresses support for Emily Silverman's placement on the board as interim VP/Program Chair. She also explains that it is a difficult time with the pandemic and that the board is in an emergency situation and can move to make a decision on the issue of filling the position. Jonathan Lee asks Susan Maloney and Anna Hennessey to clarify and state what will happen with the President position in 2021-2022. Susan Maloney states that there will be an issue of filling the position of President in 2021-2022 but that the board can move on with the piece of filling the VP position now. Anna Hennessey repeats her earlier point that the board and the full membership can vote on filling the President position for 2021-2022 in March of 2021. She states that the Operating Agreement allows the board to vote on filling the vacant position of VP/Program Chair for 2020-2021. She also emphasizes that it is getting late in the cycle of preparing for the 2021 conference and filling the position as soon as possible is a priority since the VP is critical to organizing the conference.

Sakena Young-Scaggs makes a motion to propose that Emily Silverman be seated as the interim Vice President for the region. Anjeanette LeBoeuf seconds the motion. Jonathan states that for the record, appointing Emily Silverman as the VP is according to the Operating Agreement, but also according to the Operating Agreement and according to the Governance Specialist he spoke with, having a special election to fill the spot of VP is recommended so that there is not a perpetual vacancy of the VP position. Sakena Young-Scaggs asks for clarity on the vacancy that Jonathan Lee has referred to. Anna Hennessey repeats her earlier point, stating that the vacancy next year will be that of the President, not the VP/Program Chair. Young-Scaggs states that in March, the board can hold a special election with the membership for the position of 2021-2022 President and that the election would then resolve the problem so that it would not be perpetual. John Erickson motions that he would like to call the question. Sakena Young-Scaggs seconds the motion. Erickson asks Anna Hennessey to restate the motion before voting commences. Hennessey restates the motion, which is that the board elect Dr. Emily Silverman as the AAR/WR interim Vice President and Program Chair for the 2020-2021 term. The term will begin on May 22, 2020 and will end at the day of the Business Meeting of the annual conference in the spring of 2021.

The board votes through private chat on Zoom to Anna Hennessey. Anna Hennessey states the results of the election: out of 11 voting members, 10 vote YES for Emily Silverman as interim VP and 1 vote NO for Emily Silverman as interim VP. 0 vote ABSTAIN. Emily

Silverman is officially confirmed as 2020-2021 AAR/WR interim Vice President and Program Chair. Yuria Celidwen departs meeting. Souad Ali explains that she also must depart meeting. Before departing, Ali emphasizes her support for Susan Maloney, explaining the board's previous unanimous decision in 2013 to appoint Maloney as Honorary Board Member and Advisor to the board.

## **5. Background information for 2021 Conference update: report from the President**

Anna Hennessey explains that the situation with the pandemic has created great uncertainty in the world, something that the AAR/WR has already personally experienced with the emergency restructuring of its 2020 conference to make it a virtual event, and that this also affects how different associations are organizing their future conferences. She explains that AAR National has decided to go forward with plans to have its annual conference in Boston in November 2020, though National is also developing a contingency plan in case the conference cannot proceed as planned. Similar to what AAR is doing, Hennessey suggests that AAR/WR look into a contingency plan for its 2021 conference in case COVID-19 is still a problem in the spring of 2021. Hennessey gives a summary of an April 2020 report she wrote and meeting she had with an AAR National leadership team about the 2020 AAR/WR Virtual Conference. Hennessey met on Zoom with AAR President Jose Cabezon, AAR Executive Director Alice Hunt, and AAR Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer Robert Puckett, primarily to discuss the logistics of how AAR/WR organized its 2020 conference, as well as any feedback the region had received from participants in that conference.

Hennessey's preliminary report includes logistics and feedback related to the 2020 conference. Hennessey will write a final report once she has feedback information. She returns to an issue previously discussed by the board during the March 2020 conference, which pertains to the need for surveys so that the board can receive formal feedback from members on how they felt the conference went. Surveys should include a diversity survey, something previously discussed by Sakena Young-Scaggs, John Erickson, and Joseph Paxton.

Hennessey next discusses the current status of 2021 conference preparations with contacts at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), the host institution in Berkeley for the 2021 AAR/WR Annual Conference. Dr. Rita Sherma, the academic contact at GTU has sent confirmation that the Provost approved financial support for AAR/WR's 2021 annual conference to be held at GTU. Hennessey explains that in light of the precarious situation of funding for academic conferences particularly at this time of global pandemic and economic crisis, the support from GTU is very good news. She explains that the theme for the 2021 conference will maintain aspects of the call that Roy Whitaker wrote before he resigned but that it will also relate to sustainability because Rita Sherma and GTU have an initiative to work on the topic of sustainability. Hennessey explains that Dr. Sherma has also expressed understanding that the AAR/WR may have to hold a virtual conference in 2021, depending on the situation with COVID-19, and that the host institution can help with a contingency plan and going virtual should that become necessary. Hennessey states that she is interested in following the model set forth by AAR National by which AAR/WR would plan for its 2021 conference at GTU but would also develop a strong contingency plan by November 2020 and make a decision to go virtual much earlier than it did this past year for its 2020 conference.

Hennessey notes that the AAR/WR Policy File is in need of updating. One issue pertains to the \$1500 listed in the Policy File as the amount of subsidy traditionally provided by the host institution. Based on Hennessey's conversations with Joseph Paxton (Conference Manager) and Brian Clearwater (Past Regional Coordinator), the number should be \$5000. Joseph Paxton comments that in addition to \$5000, it is also possible to receive funding through fundraising, which he is interested in. He may also speak to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) in Berkeley to see if there is any additional funding to help with hospitalities or accommodation. Sakena Young-Scaggs brings up possible ADA concerns that have arisen in the past with GTU and asks if those are being addressed. Joseph Paxton responds that he is looking into renting hospitality golf carts that GTU for giving campus tours and shuttling around guests. He will ask if usage of those carts can be part of the contract with GTU and if not, the AAR/WR will pay the cost out of pocket. Paxton notes that there will be four student workers for the conference and one will be required to help with those carts. He would also like to be in touch with the Diversity Advocate (Sakena Young-Scaggs) in working on this aspect of the conference.

#### **6. Advocating for an AARWR virtual conference in 2021 and all future conferences: presented by Jonathan Lee, Regional Coordinator.**

Jonathan Lee states that there was a recent meeting of the AAR Regions. He states that the AAR/WR was not the only region to go virtual in 2020. Several smaller regions are considering merging their conferences together to make one big virtual conference. At the Regions meeting, National stated that it is hands free on how the regions proceed individually with their conferences. AAR National also stated that the regions need to be very clear about what type of conference they are going to have before people register. Lee states that it was good that AAR/WR gave full refunds on its 2020 conference due to the restructuring of the conference. He also recommends advertising as a hybrid conference because this may make transitioning (to virtual) smoother.

Lee discusses the issue of accessibility, and how beyond the problems with COVID-19 that arise for in-person conferences, there will be other problems for attending conferences that arise. This includes the economy and the cost for people to attend conferences. Lee states that having a hybrid or virtual option for people would be helpful. Susan Maloney asks Lee when he had the meeting with the AAR Regional Coordinators. She also asks for Lee to get the minutes from the Regions meeting and explains that these minutes will help the AAR/WR board to understand the issues being discussed. Maloney states that he can send the minutes to Anna Hennessey or to whomever is writing the minutes for the AAR/WR board meetings. Lee responds that the Regions meeting was on May 12, 2020 for a duration of three hours and that he can get the minutes. Maloney asks who was present at the meeting of the Regions and Lee states that it was attended by all of the Regional Coordinators and chaired by Katherine Downey, the Regional Director.

#### **7. Open discussion about how to proceed with the AAR/WR 2021 conference: full board**

New board member Jacob Perez would like to know when it is that the AAR/WR normally starts promoting the conference and accepting registrations. Jonathan Lee states that there is a timeline in the Policy File but that typically an e-blast goes out to all of the members in late May or early June. Lee states that at this point in time (end of May), the theme should be written and all of the

unit chairs should have submitted their own themes to the VP/Program Chair. Anna Hennessey states that from her experience as VP, the individual CFPs are collected around the beginning of the summer and the marketing really starts in the fall. Anjeanette LeBoeuf states that she is aware of the timeline but remarks that this particular time in our history is one of fatigue in the academy. She recommends allowing leniency on our timeline this year and not rushing for June as the deadline for the chairs and the e-blasts so as not to further overwhelm our chairs and members. Jonathan Lee states that it is ok and the AAR/WR can have a flexible timeline.

Marie Cartier brings up the issue of how virtual modalities also have the capacity to create problems with accessibility, noting that not all people have the same access to online services and equipment. As a professor who teaches classes on LGBTQ history, she has also had several students write to her that they have privacy concerns attending her classes online and have written privately to say that they are not in a safe space to discuss the issues of the course since they are not in a classroom. She believes that for queer people, an in-person conference is preferable, and that there are populations that will be severely impacted by going online. Cartier explains that this is also the case for the events held by the AAR/WR, including the Queer Caucus, which needs to hold its event in an embodied space. Susan Maloney notes that these points are very important and that like other associations and institutions, we are in uncharted waters about how to proceed. Maloney encourages the board to make declarative statements and understand why it is making its decisions whether it decides to have an in-person or virtual conference. She also expresses that there could be a backlash with Zoom and going virtual due to networking and collegiality concerns. Maloney further emphasizes that especially in light of the global and national situation, it is very good news for this year that GTU has offered to fund AAR/WR's 2021 conference.

John Erickson commends the AAR/WR for having restructured its 2020 conference to make it a virtual event, which he views as a significant success. However, he states that although it could be possible to involve some individuals in our conferences through a virtual modality in the future, he agrees with Marie Cartier and believes in the corporeal nature of having a conference. He also agrees with Susan Maloney's points about networking and the need for young scholars to see each other and communicate in person. Erickson further emphasizes Cartier's points about how the switch to online meetings and conferences has an impact on low-income and queer people. Jacob Perez speaks from the perspective of a student, expressing the needs of students to attend in-person conferences, preferably earlier in their careers. He states that it is not clear that a virtual or even a hybrid conference model will ensure accessibility for students since not all students have the same access to technology. At this time, he believes that we should focus on the in-person conference and then pivot to a contingency plan for a virtual conference if we need to do so.

Anna Hennessey states that she also believes the membership should be consulted about virtual conferences and the board needs to learn two things from members: first, for those who were able to attend the 2020 conference, what were their experiences of that conference; and second, what are the members' thoughts on virtual and hybrid modalities. Hennessey returns to the discussion of creating surveys for the membership about the topic, suggesting that a committee could be created to work on this. Anjeanette LeBoeuf states that a student should definitely be involved in the committee. Anna Hennessey states that one of the student reps or both (James Berry and Jacob Perez) could be involved and that this topic can be developed organically through emails. Hennessey suggests that the committee focus on a shorter survey of perhaps ten questions since longer surveys can be cumbersome. She says that it would be helpful

for the board to have the information by the November 2020 national conference so that board members have actual feedback from others to work with. Anjeanette LeBoeuf asks if the board must decide at the 5/22/2020 meeting how it will proceed with the 2021 conference or if it can wait for the feedback to make a more educated decision on how to proceed. Anna Hennessey responds that this is not a voting item listed on the agenda. The topic is just for discussion at the 5/22/2020 meeting. She states that she is in favor of waiting until there is more feedback from the community and to find out more about what is happening with COVID-19.

Jonathan Lee states that it would be good to have a decision made by July 2020 so that when an e-blast goes out on the call for papers, the board knows the modality that the conference will be in. He states that if we state to our members in the Call for Papers that there is going to be an in-person conference and then we shift to a virtual conference, there will be a legal issue with the registration fee. Anna Hennessey states that GTU should also be involved and notified of this decision since they are currently funding the conference. Marie Cartier states that we can make the decision at the point where we have to make it, just as AAR National has stated that they are making their decision by October 12, 2020 for their November 2020 annual conference. Cartier also makes the point that a hybrid conference could be difficult since not all rooms at our host institutions have the AV capabilities required for a hybrid conference.

Anjeanette LeBoeuf brings up the legal issues Jonathan Lee had referred to and states that the AAR/WR could put an asterisk in its Call for Paper letting the reader understand how, based on the situation of the pandemic, the modality for our conference may change for 2021 (e.g. “Due to the type of times we are living in, conference could be in person, hybrid, or all virtual, ever changing”). LeBoeuf questions why the board needs to decide the conference model by July. Anna Hennessey suggests modeling after what AAR National is doing, developing the in-person conference while still keeping a contingency plan in mind. Jonathan Lee responds to clarify that he is not saying that the board has to decide to have a hybrid conference by July but that the board can discuss the matter. He states that his more important topic pertains to how registration will be dealt with if the conference model changes, which will mean that it is another free conference. Anna Hennessey responds that if the board decides in November to move into a virtual conference mode, there will be ample time to discuss the registration fees. She believes that the fees would be reduced but not completely refunded in the way that they were for the 2020 conference.

Regarding registration, James Berry proposes creating a split-level registration fee that would indicate the normal fee and then a reduced rate if the conference goes virtual. Joseph Paxton reports that the topic of registration fees has come up previously in his CM reports, particularly regarding family members attending the conference for one session only. He proposes looking into family/friend guest rates for single sessions.

## **8. Evaluation of 5/22 2020 AAR/WR Zoom Board Meeting: Facilitator Susan Maloney**

AAR/WR Facilitator Susan Maloney evaluates the Zoom meeting for the board. Her evaluative process involves asking board members a series of questions, their answers of which are sent through the Zoom chat to everyone and then discussed together as a group.